1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
OI20 Tiwi OI20

571 602 628 he had arrived there as a member of a large war party. This situation stemmed from the coexistence, on the one hand, of the intricate web of kinship that united everybody present and made the problem of who would support whom unpredictable enough, and, on the other, the intricate network of deals and promises and personal alliances and obligations that every senior Tiwi man had woven inside the kinship system. A Tiwi elder did not, for example, have one category of relatives called his mother's brothers; he had at least three different categories of mother's brothers. There were those mother's brothers who had given him nothing, those who had given him wives, and those who had promised him a wife but were dragging their feet on delivery, or even trying to renege on their promise. In pressing a case against one of this third category, an elder might quite conceivably alienate some of his mother's brothers of the second category. Nor could he be sure of the support of even his own brothers, since they were certainly cultivating, and possibly undercutting him with, the same donors of daughters as he was involved with. Perhaps the nondelivery, which was the whole basis of his case against the mother's brother, had been instigated by his own brother trying to engineer a rebestowal of the girl to him. Because of the two networks, that of formal kinship obligations and that of marriage deals, two Tiwi seniors engaged in a dispute had no impartial body to whom they could submit their arguments about breach of contract. Disputes between a young man and an elder could [674] be submitted to the publicly witnessed duel, since these were not breaches of contract but cases of trespass by the young men, and as such were crimes. [626] Impartial public opinion upheld the old men and punished the young men every time. The old men's arguments with each other, however, could not be [686] so adjusted, since they involved marriage deals (as distinct from seduction) and in marriage deals everybody was involved and nobody was impartial. Where any senior stood on any marriage deal in dispute depended on how that [557] deal fitted into his own conniving. In that area of life, every adult man had his own axes to grind and a disinterested group of umpires was impossible to find.

628 578 Thus Tiwi battles had to be the confused, disorderly, inconclusive things they always were. They usually lasted all day, during which about two-thirds of the elapsed time was consumed in violent talk and mutual abuse between constantly changing central characters and satellites. The remaining third of the time was divided between duels involving a pair of men who threw spears at each other until one was wounded, and brief flurries of more general weapon throwing involving perhaps a dozen men at a time, which ended whenever somebody, even a spectator, was hit. As a result of this full day of violence, perhaps a few of the cases would be settled that night—by a father handing over his delayed daughter, or a man with a disputed wife relinquishing her to her rightful husband—but when the war party left next day to return home, the number of cases settled was likely to be less than the number of new feuds, grievances, and injuries that had originated during the day of battle. For not only did the participants carry away from the battlefield a vivid memory of all the physical wounds, intended or accidental, inflicted by whom